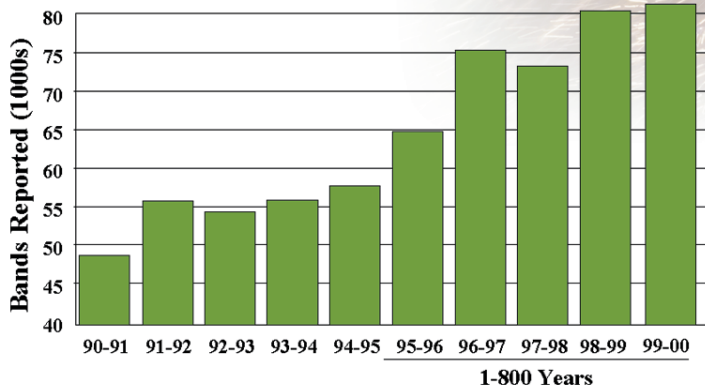


Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Increasing Band Reporting Rates Via a 1-800 Telephone Number

State and federal conservation agencies band 350,000 waterfowl annually, including 125,000 Mallards, the most popular and abundant hunted species. Data from band recoveries are used to determine survival, movements, and distributions of harvests. The rate at which hunters report the recovery of bird bands is important. Obviously, the more bands are reported, the more data are available, but the band reporting rate, per se, is especially important. It is used to estimate harvest rates and assess the impact and effectiveness of hunting regulations. A 1991 report estimated that the band reporting rate for Mallards was only 32%; i.e., only one in three hunters who recovered a banded Mallard reported it to the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL), the National repository for banding data and the clearinghouse for reports of banded birds at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland.

Band Recovery Reports: 1990-99



In 1995, BBL established a toll-free telephone number (1-800-327-BAND) to increase band reporting rates by making it convenient for hunters to report bands. The 1-800 number was printed on the bands, and it was advertised on posters, the federal "duck stamp" and state hunting regulations brochures. Hunter response to the 1-800 number has been excellent, and record numbers of bands have been reported. Preliminary studies estimate that the current band reporting rate for Mallards from some regions may be as high as 80%, more than double the previous rate.

The success of the 1-800 number has not been without costs, though. While conservation agencies have benefited from having more and better banding data, and a better return from expensive field operations, BBL's operating costs have increased substantially. The annual cost of 1-800 waterfowl bands, the telephone bill, temporary help to answer phones during the hunting season, and an after-hours answering service is now approximately \$250,000, only half of which is currently available to BBL in base funding. A major new study of waterfowl band reporting rates in 2001 will pose additional funding needs for BBL.